

PROTECTING YOUR WOODLAND FROM DESTRUCTIVE CUTTING PRACTICES

You are enjoying a quiet summer afternoon when there is an unexpected knock at the door. You open the door to find a person who is interested in harvesting some of the trees from your woodland. At first you're not interested, but this person seems very competent and knowledgeable. Their company is harvesting timber from your neighbor's land, and since they are already in the neighborhood, are willing to offer you "top dollar" for your trees. They offer to walk with you through your woods and show you how they would harvest your lands, what trees they would take and what trees they would leave. It all seems very reasonable and before you know it, you have a "handshake agreement" to sell your timber.

Only, things don't turn out quite how you thought they would. The trees you thought would be left are gone. The money you received is far less than what you were offered. You don't know who to contact for help since it was a handshake agreement, and you're not sure who did this to you and your woodland. No, not what you thought would happen at all. Unfortunately, this is a common story that woodland owners across the United States are all too familiar with.

How can you prevent this from happening?

- Don't ever just take someone's word about the value of your woodland. Contact your Department of Natural Resources forester, or one of the industrial or private consulting foresters participating in the Cooperating Forester Program. A professional forester can help you establish a management plan for your property, and put you in touch with a professional logger who will respect

your interests as well as the land. They can also help you develop a harvest and regeneration plan, identify the trees to be harvested, estimate their worth, and administer the harvest to insure that all your concerns are adequately addressed.

- Have a signed contract with the person who is buying your timber. A timber sale contract is a legally binding document that allows both you and the person who is buying your timber to establish and agree upon your expectation for how your woodland will be treated during the harvest. It is your protection against timber theft and liability. It also provides you with recourse if things don't go the way you agreed.
- Before you allow anyone into your woods with a chain saw, contact your DNR forester or the Wisconsin Professional Loggers Association for the names of reputable logging firms in your area. Take the time to talk with them and learn about their business, and ask for references. Make sure that the person you contract with understands your goals for your woodland and how this harvest will help you to achieve them. Things to consider when asking for references include training and continuing education, experience working with woodland owners, machinery that they will be using, and proof of liability insurance.

These are some simple things that you can do to protect your woodland and wallet from destructive cutting practices. To learn more about planning a timber harvest, we recommend reading **Wisconsin Forest Management Guidelines – Chapter 12, Timber Harvesting** as well as University of Wisconsin Extension's publication GWQ036, **"Conducting a Successful Timber Harvest."**

*"Don't ever
just take
someone's word
about the
value
of your
woodland."*